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SUBJECT: "SEEING YOU IN THE WORLDWIND": PALLO JORDAN ON
DOMESTIC POLITICS

Summary

¶1. (C) Arts and Culture Minister Pallo Jordan, one of the African National Congress' (ANC) sharpest minds, opened up to a small group of students and professors at a University of Johannesburg lecture on November 13. Jordan began his address by steeping his remarks in a theoretical, Marxist framework before turning to domestic political issues. He was equally introspective and critical when he discussed former President Thabo Mbeki, ANC President Jacob Zuma, the newly formed Congress of the People (COPE), and the future direction of policy in the ruling party. His is a voice that risks getting lost in the fervent back-and-forth of this country's tense pre-election political climate, but for now at least remains strong. End Summary.

Jordan Speaks to Marxist Theory, Mbeki, Zuma, COPE . . .

¶2. (C) Arts and Culture Minister Pallo Jordan addressed a small crowd of students and professors at a University of Johannesburg lecture series sponsored by Business Day columnist and professor Xolela Mangcu on November 13. Jordan, long one of the ANC's most intellectual members, opened his address by citing a 1988 essay written by deceased communist and anti-apartheid activist Joe Slovo. Jordan cited the essay because he said, "Marxist theory is the only way to unpack what has happened with the formation of the new party by Mosiuoa Lekota and Mbhazima 'Sam' Shilowa." He noted that "we see class contradictions as the basis for problems within the country and the ANC movement." He went further to say that at their root, the class contradictions pit black capitalists, black managers, and black professionals vs. the black poor. He perceived "the current infighting within the ruling party as a symptom of the greater struggle over resources between members ... (as everyone knows) the quickest route to the middle class is through government jobs." Jordan blamed both Mbeki and Zuma for failing to make progress on the ANC's goal of balancing class contradictions. He promised, however, that the ANC will survive because 1) the party treasures its past, 2) the party remains introspective, and 3) the party continues to grow intellectually.

¶3. (C) Jordan said that COPE "will not last long if it fails to displace the Democratic Alliance (DA) as the 'official opposition' of the country." (Note: COPE is the latest acronym for the new party formed by Lekota and Shilowa. The ANC has challenged the name with the Independent Electoral Commission and the judicial system. End Note.) Jordan promised "not to write off the new party." However, he opined that COPE would be a marginal group if it fails to displace the DA. He noted that it is wrong of COPE to try to claim the Freedom Charter as its own and that the group is an organization without policies right now. He said Lekota would have a hard time proving that he was a victim of a

power grab and said at the core of the new party is that "one group of leaders lost to another group at Polokwane." He lamented that Lekota is a man of "woolly thinking."

¶4. (C) Jordan discussed the ANC's national executive committee meeting in September where the decision to fire Mbeki was taken. He said when the meeting convened there QMbeki was taken. He said when the meeting convened there were those who wanted to see Mbeki fired, those who wanted the former President to keep his job, and those who were undecided. He said the decision was taken to recall Mbeki at that meeting because most ANC members felt there had been an abuse of power by the Presidency. Despite the sentiment that Mbeki abused his power, Jordan noted that "Mbeki was the best head of government South Africa had in the 20th century." However, he said that as good a leader as Mbeki was, it would be unfair to label Zuma an "idiot." Jordan noted that the ANC President's birthmarks are still there as "Zuma had little formal education." He noted further that "Zuma is a man of remarkable intelligence who has held his own with some of the world's smartest leaders. Had the breaks fallen differently for him, he would have had a better education."

... and Manuel, Malema, and the Future

¶5. (C) Jordan noted that for the ANC to go forward, it "must create synergies between the party's pro-labor and pro-business policies as has been done elsewhere such as China." He said the importance of such synergy is one of the reasons the party decided to retain Finance Minister Trevor Manuel. He said, "Manuel had to be retained because of economic realities. We understand this and took note of it ... Moreover, we think he has done a great job." He warned that the failure to bring the "maximum (the wealthy) and the minimum (the poor) together will spell trouble for the ANC down the road."

¶6. (C) Echoing President Kgalema Motlanthe, who has pushed for a youth training program for the ANC, he said that the party needs to better mentor its youth. He said, "We are failing to mentor young members and we essentially stopped doing this in 1992." He noted that ANC Youth League President Julius Malema is "not measured, which is unfortunate."

¶7. (C) Jordan dismissed the notion that ANC leaders are not challenged and would not be challenged in the future. He admitted that the ANC had trouble standing up to former President Nelson Mandela because "there was no one of his stature." However, he said, "Let me be clear that Mbeki could not do as he wanted within the ANC ... it is a fallacy to think this. Mbeki was challenged on everything he did." Drawing lessons for the future, he warned that Zuma would be foolish to think he can do as he pleases. He said, "All Zuma needs to do to be reminded that he cannot do as he pleases is to look at what the ANC did to Mbeki by recalling him."

Comment

¶8. (C) Jordan is one of the ANC's sharpest minds and his views on domestic politics carry weight not just within the ANC, but throughout South African society. Jordan is an introspective and critical thinker, meaning he is unafraid to point out the leadership failings of the movement and of Mbeki and Zuma. Such characteristics also mean that he is unafraid to point out where COPE may struggle and how the ANC's policies may evolve over time if synergy is not created between those with different ideologies within the ruling party. His is a voice that risks getting lost in the fervent back-and-forth of this country's pre-election political climate, but for now at least remains strong.